

**Statement of
Rep. Henry A. Waxman
April 25, 2002**

Two days ago, the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee voted to endorse politics over science by designating Yucca Mountain, Nevada as the permanent repository for the nation's high level nuclear waste. Today, the full Committee will do the same.

Why do we find ourselves in this situation? Because the President broke his promise to the state of Nevada that he would wait for the science before making a decision on Yucca Mountain. As a result, members must now decide between shutting down the Yucca Mountain site altogether or prematurely designating the site on the basis of inadequate information.

Our decision will result in 77,000 tons of nuclear waste being moved to Nevada with impacts lasting tens of thousands of years.

Time after time, industry has argued that the federal government cannot act because the science is not yet good enough. When we've tried to enact health or environmental legislation, we've been told we need to wait for more science, for better science. Can we legislate on global warming? No -- we need more science. Tighten air pollution standards -- nope, we need more science.

When it comes to strong health and environmental legislation, industry never thinks there's enough science. But now industry -- and many members -- want to push science aside. But for a decision like Yucca Mountain, with impacts spanning thousands of years, we ought to have the best science of all.

But we all know we don't have anything close to the best science today.

Last week, the General Accounting Office testified that there are hundreds of unresolved technical issues with Yucca Mountain. According to the GAO, if the Administration had waited until it had better information to recommend Yucca Mountain, DOE would be in a much better position to answer the many questions about this site.

Even the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board testified that the DOE's technical basis for Yucca Mountain's performance is only "weak to moderate."

Yucca Mountain appears to be just the latest example of this Administration putting politics ahead of science. From efforts to weaken protections from arsenic in drinking water to climate change to ergonomics, the Administration has repeatedly placed ideology and politics ahead of science.

Yucca Mountain is also one more reason why it is important that the Vice President disclose who he met with regarding the national energy policy. According to press reports, the chairman of the nation's largest nuclear utility, Exelon Corporation, met personally with Vice

President Cheney in March 2001 and called for “decisive action” on Yucca Mountain. Now today we see the “decisive action” that Exelon requested, even though the science is far from decisive.

Mr. Chairman, I urge all members to oppose this legislation.